



## Christopher B. Laughlin

- Special Agent
- Age 37 at time of sentencing
- Lived in Whiteland, Indiana



# CDSE

Center for Development  
of Security Excellence

# CASE STUDY

## Fraud

### WHAT HAPPENED

Christopher B. Laughlin has been sentenced after pleading guilty to making false statements during his employment as a government background investigator.

Federal employees, contractors, and military members must undergo a background investigation to determine their suitability for serving in a position of trust and obtaining any required security clearance. Background investigators conduct interviews, review documents, and record the information they find in reports of investigation. Federal agencies rely on these reports to determine suitability of subjects for sensitive positions and security clearances.

According to court documents, Christopher Laughlin began working at the United States Office of Personnel Management as a federal background investigator in May of 2018. His position was transferred to the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) on September 30, 2019.

On August 2, 2021, as part of DCSA's internal control process, an individual reported that Laughlin never interviewed them, contrary to Laughlin's statements in an investigation report. DCSA investigated and identified three other sources Laughlin claimed to have interviewed in the same investigation who all stated that they had never been interviewed. DCSA's Office of the Inspector General then initiated a formal investigation into Laughlin's conduct.

As part of that investigation, 155 cases were reviewed and it was determined that between February 18 and September 1, 2021, Laughlin fabricated statements from at least 43 interviews that never occurred and submitted at least 22 false reports. The reports included statements that the sources purportedly made to Laughlin by people he never spoke with. DCSA spent \$69,846.44 in payroll and travel to conduct the investigations that Laughlin fabricated.

Laughlin was sentenced to one year of federal probation and forced to pay a restitution in the amount of \$69,846.44.

### INDICATORS

**Access Attributes** – As a federal background investigator, Laughlin had access to documents pertaining to personal information of individuals who were seeking employment with the Department of Defense and other government agencies within the executive branch of the United States Government, including positions requiring a security clearance.

**Personal Conduct** - Laughlin submitted at least 22 false reports containing fabricated statements from at least 43 interviews that never actually happened between February 18 and September 1, 2021.

**Criminal Conduct** - Laughlin plead guilty to "Knowingly and Willfully Making and Using a False Document in a Matter Within the Jurisdiction of the Executive Branch of the United States" while employed as a federal background investigator.

## IMPACT

- “The safety and security of our country depends on the trustworthiness and integrity of federal employees and contractors. This defendant’s decision to falsify reports and fabricate statements compromised the integrity of these important investigations, and increased the risk that unsuitable individuals are put in positions that could compromise our government and our national security. I commend DCSA OIG, DCIS, and our federal prosecutor for their commitment to protect the public and hold officials accountable for criminal violations of their oaths to serve and protect the public,” said Zachary A. Myers, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana.
- “Compromising the integrity of the security clearance process puts our country’s most sensitive information at unnecessary risk,” said Darrin K. Jones, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), Southeast Field Office. “DCIS, along with our investigative partners, will continue to aggressively pursue bad actors whose actions threaten to undermine the public’s trust.”
- DCSA spent \$69,846.44 in payroll and travel expenses to conduct the investigations that Laughlin fabricated.

## ADDITIONAL INFO

- DCSA conducts background investigations of individuals who are either employed by or seeking employment with federal agencies or government contractors. DCSA utilizes a variety of internal controls to verify the work of investigators and help ensure the integrity of its investigations.
- According to court records, Laughlin was assigned to and performed his duties with the Indianapolis office of DCSA, which is located within the Southern District of Indiana. Laughlin had the title of Special Agent.
- In the performance of his assigned background investigations, Laughlin would conduct interviews of individuals familiar with the work or background of the subjects of the investigations. Laughlin would also obtain and review documentary evidence to verify and corroborate information provided by the interviewees. Afterwards, Laughlin would prepare a Report of Investigation (ROI) containing the results of the interviews and submit them to DCSA.
- DCSA would adjudicate the investigation after receiving the ROI and provide a copy to the requesting agency. The requesting agencies use the ROIs to determine whether the subjects of the investigations were suitable for the positions and the security clearances.

### Questions to consider:

- Were there any red flags in Laughlin’s background that were not detected prior to hiring him as a background investigator?
- Could the DCSA have detected Laughlin’s fraud sooner with additional security measures?

### Resources for further exploration:

- [Job Aid: Insider Threat Fraud:](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INT_Fraud_JobAid.pdf)  
([https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INT\\_Fraud\\_JobAid.pdf](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/INT_Fraud_JobAid.pdf))
- [Job Aid: Federal Background Investigations Support to Insider Threat Inquiries:](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/BI-INT-Job-Aid.pdf)  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/BI-INT-Job-Aid.pdf>)
- [Job Aid: Insider Threat Vigilance Campaign Guide:](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/vigilance-campaign-guidance.pdf)  
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobaid/insider/vigilance-campaign-guidance.pdf>)

## Supporting Through Reporting!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP Senior Official/ITP Manager